



# WISP

## Assessing Implementation and Early Outcomes

**Seattle City Council**

Presented by:  
Angela Hawken, PhD  
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# Outline

- Background
- Introduction to HOPE
- Overview of WISP
- WISP implementation assessment
- Early WISP outcomes
- Recommendations



# Background

- Budget crises have led many states to consider alternatives to incarceration
- Most interventions have had little effect
  - Parole and probation failure rates have remained stable
- A more strategic approach is needed to improve compliance and reduce returns to prison



# Responding to violations: Too much or too little

- Most departments are limited to responding to probation and parole violations in one of two ways:
  - Ignore violation and continue to cajole offender into cooperation (too little)
  - Initiate proceedings to revoke probation/parole (too much)
- The preferred response lies between these two extremes


# What is HOPE?

- A swift and certain (but mild) sanctions model.
- ***Every*** violation is met with an immediate punishment.
- And the sentence is served ***immediately***.
- But the sentence is ***modest*** (usually only a few days in jail)



# How HOPE Works

- Supervision conditions are actually enforced
- Starts with a formal Warning Hearing
- Regular random drug testing (6x/month)
- Violations result in swift and certain but modest sanctions
- No one mandated to treatment if complying (but provided if asked)
- Three or more violations => treatment mandate



# What happens when our supervision system becomes credible?

- HOPE was put to the test
- A randomized controlled trial of HOPE v probation-as-usual was launched in 2007.
- Hundreds of criminal justice staff (judges, probation officers, court staff, public defenders, police, wardens) participated to make this experiment possible.



# What did the experiment show?

- Credibility wins

## ■ BIG

- Drug use plummeted (dare we use the “A” word?)
- Missed appointments plummeted
- Arrests plummeted

And MOST important from a cost-perspective

- The program was inexpensive to run and incarceration days dropped sharply





# Introduction to WISP

- Applies HOPE principles to a higher risk population (parolees)
- Hearings officer assumes role of judge
- Violation of parole conditions results in an immediate arrest and offender appears for hearing within a few days
- Violators are sanctioned to a few days in jail (sentences increase for repeat violations)
- Emphasis on personal responsibility and behavior change



# WISP Implementation

- Assessed WISP performance on the 12 HOPE Benchmarks-For-Success (see handout)
- Program fidelity has been extraordinarily high
- Level of coordination among the staff members involved has been exemplary



# Early WISP Outcomes

- WISP pilot is evaluated using an intent-to-treat randomized controlled trial
  - The “gold standard” for evaluation research
  - The trial is registered with the federal government



# Description of WISP pilot RCT

- Location

- Seattle Community Justice Center

- Pilot launch date

- February, 2011

- Length of program

- Will run for at least 12 months

- Size of pilot

- 70 subjects assigned to either WISP or PAU

# Description of subjects

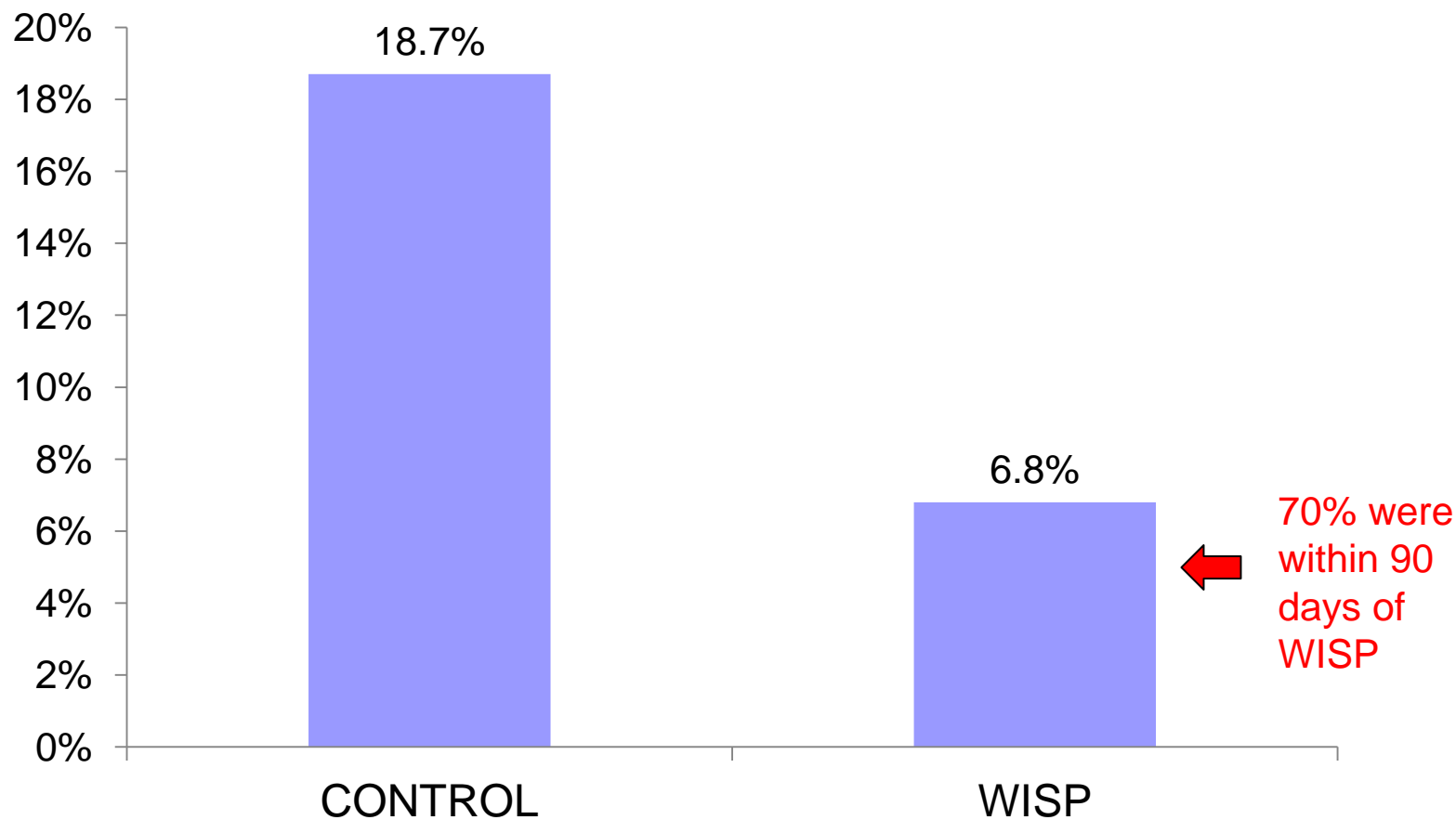
	WISP	Control
Age (mean years)	40	40
Race/Ethnicity*		
Asian/Pacific Islander	6.4%	4.3%
Black	34.0%	38.3%
Native American/Indian	4.3%	4.3%
White	53.2%	51.1%
Unknown	2.1%	2.1%
Previously Treated	55%	55%

*\*Values do not sum to 100% due to rounding*



# Summary of WISP Outcomes

# Positive drug tests



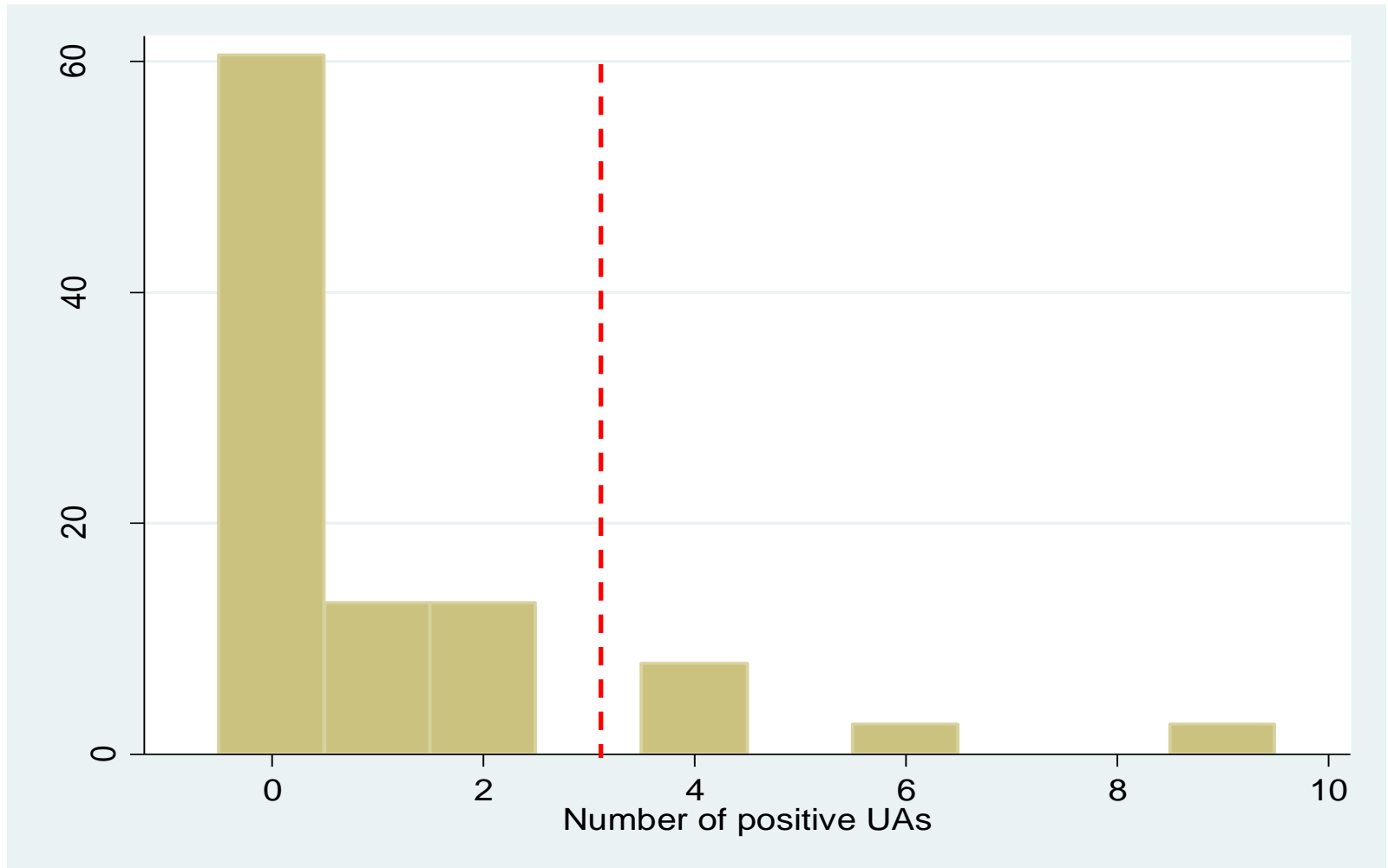
Frequency of testing: WISP average = 19; Control average = 4



# WISP as BEHAVIORAL TRIAGE



# Distribution of positive drug tests





# Hearings

- “Orientation” Hearings

- ☐ Average hearing = 17 minutes
- ☐ Most are delivered en-masse
- ☐ Per parolee = 6 minutes
- ☐ Would be less if operated at scale

- Violation Hearings

- ☐ Average hearing = 18 minutes



# Bench warrants

- A failure to appear for random drug testing or for a routine office visit leads to the immediate issuance of a bench warrant under WISP, which the Community Response Unit serves
- There were more than twice as many warrants issued for WISP subjects than control (33 compared with 15)
- WISP warrants were closed more quickly (median was 5 days v 20 days for control)

# New crimes

- At the six month followup the study subjects in the control group had been found guilty of four new felony crimes (description of felonies: 1 “sex”, 1 “drug”, 2 “other”)
- The WISP group had generated only one new felony (description of felony: 1 “property”)
- Longer followup is needed

# Incarceration

- WISP led to shorter incarceration durations
  - Reduced pre-hearing jail wait (5.7 v 16 days)
  - Reduced jail sentences (44.5 v 20.5 days)
  - Reduced prison confinement (77 v 29 days)
- Overall incarceration
  - WISP => increase # confinement episodes but reduced days
  - Overall WISP saved 134 days



# Recommendations

- WISP outcomes are extremely promising but conclusions are limited by small sample size
- WISP study will be of national interest
  - Study outcomes at one-year followup
- Restrict random drug testing to drug-involved parolees
- Assess workload impact
- Pay attention to scale issues
- Develop a list of mandatory sanction violations v discretionary sanctions



# Contact information

- Please address questions or comments to Angela Hawken at:

[ahawken@pepperdine.edu](mailto:ahawken@pepperdine.edu)